

MINUTES

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 58th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Call to Order: By **VICE CHAIRMAN LARRY LEHMAN**, on January 22, 2003 at 3:40 P.M., in Room 137 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Rep. Kathleen Galvin-Halcro, Vice Chairman (D)
Rep. Larry Lehman, Vice Chairman (R)
Rep. Norman Ballantyne (D)
Rep. Norma Bixby (D)
Rep. Gary Branae (D)
Rep. Nancy Fritz (D)
Rep. Carol Gibson (D)
Rep. Verdell Jackson (R)
Rep. Bob Lake (R)
Rep. Bob Lawson (R)
Rep. Joe McKenney (R)
Rep. Clarice Schrumpf (R)
Rep. Pat Wagman (R)

Members Excused: Rep. Joan Andersen, Chairman (R)

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Eddy McClure, Legislative Branch
Mari Prewett, Committee Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed. The time stamp for these minutes appears at the end of the content it refers to.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing & Date Posted: HJ 8, 1/17/2003; HN 274, 1/14/2003
Executive Action: None

HEARING ON HJ 8

Sponsor: REP. CAROL JUNEAU, HD 85, BROWNING

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REP. JUNEAU stated that HJ 8 asks the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee to do a study on the dropout rate of American Indian students in Montana's public schools. She went on to say that the study would address several issues that impact the dropout rate, including at-risk factors such as; age, credit deficiencies, drug and alcohol use, teen pregnancies, attendance, suspension and expulsion and how these factors effect the dropout rate. **REP. JUNEAU** explained that the Interim Committee would hold hearings on and off reservations throughout the State seeking recommendations to address the dropout rate issue.

She went on to state that statistics show that this is not only an issue that affects reservation communities, but also an issue facing urban communities. **REP. JUNEAU** further explained that the study would look at the fiscal impacts of dropouts to schools. She continued by saying that HJ 8 asks for the collaboration of the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education and the Montana Interagency Coordinating Council. **REP. JUNEAU** stated that the final results of the study would be a strategic state plan that would identify possible strategies to break the cycle of at-risk factors and significantly reduce the dropout rate, thus increasing the graduation rate of American Indian students in Montana.

REP. JUNEAU then advised the committee that OPI currently has a grant from the Department of Education to work on dropout prevention and is working with six schools in Montana that have significant dropout rates. She further stated that a majority of these schools are located on Indian Reservations. **REP. JUNEAU** stated that OPI's project would help the study and facilitate the efforts of the State's Tribal Affairs Committee. **REP. JUNEAU** went on to explain her reasoning for believing the study is important. **REP. JUNEAU** referred to Exhibit 1 which related to income levels and dropout rates in relation to white students and Indian students. **REP. JUNEAU** then referred a newspaper article regarding the dropout rate of Montana's American Indians, Exhibit 2; a report from Sunburst School District #2, Exhibit 3; a Resolution from the Montana-Wyoming Indian Education Association, Exhibit 4; and Graduation Rate with a pie chart on the reverse side, Exhibit 5.

REP. JUNEAU then referred to a sheet with circles on it. She explained that there were 4,202 circles which represent Indian

children that entered school and that if the paper were folded in half, it would represent the number of children that had gone away from the beginning of high school until graduation. **REP.**

JUNEAU stated that this issue needs to be studied and report prepared for the next session of the legislature so that they can begin to deal with the issue and find some solutions.

EXHIBIT (edh13a01)

EXHIBIT (edh13a02)

EXHIBIT (edh13a03)

EXHIBIT (edh13a04)

EXHIBIT (edh13a05)

EXHIBIT (edh13a06)

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 12}

Proponents' Testimony:

Jeff Weldon, Legal Counsel, Office of Public Instruction OPI, stated that last year at the direction of Superintendent, Linda McCulloch, OPI applied for and received a grant from the United States Department of Education for the Montana American Indian Dropout Prevention Program Project. He explained that the project focuses on state level strategies as well as local and school level solutions for alleviating the problem. **Mr. Weldon** stated that there would be no significant cost to OPI for doing the study. He then explained how OPI would gather data and OPI would be willing to participate in helping to design strategies that would help in the development of a plan to reduce the dropout rate. **Mr. Weldon** stated that Superintendent McCulloch is supportive of HJ 8 and the study to address the problem of dropouts.

Lori Falcon, Indian Education Specialist, Office of Public Instruction OPI, stated that OPI working with the Montana-Wyoming Indian Education Association and the Interagency Prevention Council would collaborate to design and implement strategies to reduce the dropout rate and graduate American Indian students at the same rate as the non-Indian students. She went on to state that OPI was working with six demonstration school districts on Indian Reservations that have the highest rates for high school dropouts. **Ms. Falcon** discussed the costs for the program and how the program was being implemented. She stated that there are a few districts that are showing progress and lowering their dropout rates but there is a long way to go. **Ms. Falcon** talked about the difficulties in implementing reform and the obstacles involved. She urged the committee's support of this resolution.

Linda Gryczan, Montana's Women's Lobby, stated that it is in everyone's best interest to know why American Indian children are dropping out. She further stated that it is important to do this study now particularly when there is a partnering opportunity with OPI. **Ms. Gryczan** stated that now there is an opportunity to address the dropout problem and it should not be put off.

Brad Martin, Executive Director, Montana Democratic Party, stated that the problem cannot be solved until it is broken down, look at the causes, look at possible solutions and then lay out a plan to fix the problem. He explained that the dropout rate for American Indian students in Montana is unacceptable. **Mr. Martin** spoke in regard to the need for the methodical approach HJ 8 would take toward solving the dropout problem. He stated that strongly encouraged the committee to pass HJ 8.

Betty Whiting, Montana Association of Churches, stated the denominations belonging to the Association strongly support HJ 8. She further stated that the Association was concerned about the children of Montana. **Ms. Whiting** talked about the need for education that addresses and promotes the culture of the Indian students, develops individual abilities, judgment and a sense of moral and social responsibility. **Ms. Whiting** stated that the best interests of the child should be the guiding principle of those responsible for the child's education.

Steve Meloy, Executive Secretary, Montana Board of Public Education, talked about past programs that have addressed the need for addressing the dropout rate of the American Indian students. He stated that the Board is aware of what HJ 8 is trying to accomplish, that the Board is aware of the dropout rate and find it unacceptable. **Mr. Meloy** said that he believes that this is a great way to start on a problem that has been developing over the years.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 12 - 27.9}

Chris Christians, Montana Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, stated that this is one issue of many that came up during the last interim regarding factors occurring on Indian Reservations across Montana. He further explained that passage of the resolution would assure that the committee would be able to take the time to compile information that would be accurate and could be acted on in the future. **Mr. Christians** stated that the high number of American Indian students that drop out of high school is a huge loss to the state. **Mr. Christians** urged the committee's support.

Bob Vogel, Montana School Board Association, stated that the number of American Indian students that dropout of high school is totally unacceptable. He further stated that the as a whole the dropout rate for all Montana students is unacceptable. **Mr. Vogel** indicated that it is time that direct action is taken to resolve the dropout problem as a whole.

June Hermanson, Montanans With Disabilities for Equal Access, stated she supports the resolution. **Ms. Hermanson** talked about the dropout rate of persons with disabilities and especially female Native Americans with disabilities.

REP. BIXBY, HD 5, stated that this is an issue that has always been a problem. She explained that what is needed to help resolve the dropout problem is more information. The only way to gather data is to do a study. **REP. BIXBY** referred to the past when the issue of the dropout rate had been explored they were unable to get support. **REP. BIXBY** then referred to a paragraph in Exhibit 2 which talks about the disparities in education which the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported. **REP. BIXBY** stated that nothing has changed for years, that decisions cannot be made without data, and the need for ideas on how to improve the system to keep Indian students in school.

Opponents' Testimony: None

Informational Testimony:

Vicki Turner, Prevention Resource Center, distributed a pamphlet to the committee from the Prevention Resource Center covering what the Center does. **Ms. Turner** talked about the information in the pamphlet, Exhibit 7. She further stated that prevention is necessary and urged support of HJ 8.

EXHIBIT (edh13a07)

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 17}

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

REP. LAKE asked Ms. Falcon if they were using the information gathered from the Arlee School as it has been so successful. **Ms. Falcon** replied that they are looking at designing a profile of what aspects go into schools that are successful in keeping kids in school. She further stated that they are looking at different factors as there is no one answer, the solutions are different. **Ms. Falcon** stated one of the things about Arlee is its

consistency in their administration. She concluded that one of the things that helped the most was teacher preparedness.

REP. LAKE asked Ms. Falcon if the information that had been gathered was the same kind of information being looked for in the data, the resolution would produce. **Ms. Falcon** responded that the information gathered by OPI was the same kind of information the resolution addressed.

REP. JACKSON asked **REP. JUNEAU** if she could give a vision of what a Strategic Development Plan would look like. **REP. JUNEAU** replied that there is a lot of data, that it is now time to pull the data together and have Legislative Services put it into a format that can be used by the 59th Legislature to come up with specific goals and recommendations that can be used to resolve the problem.

REP. JACKSON asked **REP. JUNEAU** if this was going to be a broad survey that looks at more than just the school in terms of a solution to the problem. **REP. JUNEAU** replied that she hoped they would work with parents, community leaders, school boards and the schools.

REP. JACKSON asked Steve Meloy if the study showed the need for cultural education if he would be willing to take the leadership to make changes that would make it possible for these classes to be taught by people who were not certified teachers. **REP. JACKSON** further asked Mr. Meloy what kind of flexibility could be built into the education system to give the schools the flexibility needed to address the problem.

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 17 - 28}

Mr. Meloy responded that they plan to bring a variety of people to the table to come with holistic approaches to all of the problems that face the State. He further stated that possibly it is the input standards that are causing the problem. **Mr. Meloy** stated they were willing to look at their standards to see if they can do something to facilitate some of the problems. He further stated that every school in Montana needed to adopt a policy on Indian education for all. Mr. Meloy advised the committee that the Board of Education would take a leadership role in trying to mitigate the dropout problem.

REP. BRANAE asked Mr. Meloy if the Board of Education was looking at backing away from certification of teachers and hiring people from the streets. **Mr. Meloy** answered that his understanding is that they need to have highly qualified teachers as well as para-professionals. He said that the standards that have been adopted

by the Board of Education are minimal right now. **Mr. Meloy** further stated that if a unique situation were to arise and an alternative certification or accreditation were required, application could be made to OPI who would make sure everything was okay and then present it to the Board of Education for approval which could be granted.

REP. BRANAE asked **REP. JUNEAU** what the ultimate goal of the study would be and what the projected time line was. **REP. JUNEAU** answered stated she would like to see things happen right away. She further stated she is ready to go to work to do whatever can be done to resolve the problem.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSEN returns to the hearing.

REP. WAGMAN asked **REP. JUNEAU** what the students' choices were. He further asked if **REP. JUNEAU** would object to adding the word "choice." **REP. JUNEAU** stated they would look at as many factors as possible to present as many choices and opportunities as possible.

REP. WAGMAN further asked **REP. JUNEAU** what line 17 on page 2 means and if it is talking about ANB. **REP. JUNEAU** answered that she was and the financial impact on the school.

REP. WAGMAN asked **Ms. Falcon** if the No Child Left Behind Program required a choice now or in the future. **Ms. Falcon** responded that in her professional opinion No Child Left Behind legislation gives a bigger reason and stronger imperative to do a drop out study. She further stated that with the new legislation there is no real incentive to keep students in school and is working against the program.

REP. LEHMAN asked **REP. JUNEAU** if there was suppose to be a fiscal note. **REP. JUNEAU** referred the question to Steve Meloy. Mr. Meloy answered that there was no fiscal note as there was no fiscal impact.

REP. JUNEAU referred to Eddy McClure regarding the fiscal note. **Ms. McClure** stated that the reference to the fiscal note could be related to the cost for the Interim Committee in paying traveling expenses needed in visiting around the state gathering the data required.

Closing by Sponsor:

REP. JUNEAU stated that this is a necessary study. She further stated she would be happy to work with **REP. WAGMAN** on his

proposed amendments. **REP. JUNEAU** replied that she was ready to go to work to achieve the goals of the resolution.

{Tape: 2; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 18.1}

HEARING ON HB 274

Sponsor: CAROL JUNEAU, HD 85, BROWNING

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REP. JUNEAU stated that HB 274 requires students to stay in school until they are 18 years of age or graduate. She further talked about current policy which requires a student to stay in school until they are 16 or complete the 8th grade whichever is sooner. **REP. JUNEAU** stated that this was one of the key issues in the last several sessions. **REP. JUNEAU** talked about the options the bill provides for those instances when parents feel that their child should leave school before turning 18. She also referred to the provisions in the bill which refer to home schooling which exempts children from the requirements of HB 274. **REP. JUNEAU** explained that there were provisions in the bill that would allow students to attend alternative schools such as, vocational schools or attending school on a part time basis. **REP. JUNEAU** continued regarding the clarification of truancy issues covered in HB 274. **REP. JUNEAU** further commented on the need to take bold steps to strengthen education. **REP. JUNEAU** talked about statistics that have been gathered for all states, see Exhibit 8. She further stated that there can be no economic growth without an educated workforce. Education needs to be a priority but the current policy does not send that message.

EXHIBIT (edh13a08)

{Tape: 2; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 18.1 - 27}

Proponents' Testimony:

Jeff Weldon, Legal Counsel, Office of Public Instruction, stated Superintendent McCulloch believes that it is in the best interest of the State as a whole and to the people of the state to keep kids in school until they graduate. He further stated that the State incurs economic and social consequences when students drop out of school. **Mr. Weldon** talked about the Montana Statewide Dropout Report 2000-01 attached hereto as Exhibit 9 and explained the same. **Mr. Weldon** further stated when they first say the bill they had some concerns. The first concern was the GED Equivalency Diploma and second was the exemptions currently under

statutory law for compulsory attendance. **Mr. Weldon** commented on these two items. **Mr. Weldon** presented the committee with a proposed conceptual amendment to HB 274 attached as Exhibit 10. **Mr. Weldon** explained his conceptual amendment to the committee. He further talked about the exemptions to HB 274. **Mr. Weldon** stated the believes it is in the best interest of the children that they stay in school until they graduate.

EXHIBIT (edh13a09)

EXHIBIT (edh13a10)

Linda Gryczan, Montana's Women's Lobby, stated that the bill was good public policy. She further stated that finishing the 8th grade is not enough for the jobs of today. **Ms. Gryczan** continued by stating that what she really liked was the flexibility of the bill. **Ms. Gryczan** urged the committee to support HB 274.

Brad Martin, Executive Director, Montana Democratic Party, stated he supported HB 274. **Mr. Martin** talked about high price society pays for undereducated citizens. He went on to discuss the need for an educated workforce to rebuild the economy. **Mr. Martin** stated that he felt that the economy would be built one person at a time by keeping more students in school until they graduate. He stated he believed the bill was flexible where needed and set key standards.

REP. BIXBY, HD 5, talked about the need to keep kids in school until they reach 18 or graduate. She further stated that there is a need for other options and change the mind set of Montanans that education is important. **REP. BIXBY** discussed that it was unfortunate that laws were needed to accomplish the task of keeping kids in school. **REP. BIXBY** discussed the exemptions in the bill and how they relate to those people who do not want to keep their children in school until age 18. She stated she felt the bill should be supported. **REP. BIXBY** further stated that it was time the system of education was changed, as society is changing and education needs to keep up with those changes. She declared that this would be a good change for Montana and urged support of the bill.

Stanley Juneau, Superintendent of Schools, Browning, stated his support of HB 274 and that his school board also supports the bill. **Mr. Juneau** declared that he knew this was not the total answer but a big part of the answer. He further stated there was a great need to keep the students in school and teach them how to be responsible.

{Tape: 2 Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 19.1}

Opponents' Testimony:

Steve White, Legislative Liaison for the Montana Coalition of Home Educators, Bozeman, talked about the families that have taken on the task of home schooling their children. He stated that they are opposed to HB 274. **Mr. White** explained that he had worked with the Office of Public Instruction to reduce the age for taking the GED from 18 to 16. He stated the reason for lowering the age for taking the GED to 16 was because there are a lot of home school students that are ready to move on at age 16 and do not need to go to school until they are 18.

Mr. White discussed the possibility of the GED age being raised back to 18 as the age requirement is not part of the statute. He further talked about how the home schooling law came in to being and that the home schooling parent is the one responsible for the evaluation of the student. **Mr. White** stated he felt that this bill takes the rights of the parents away in determining when their child is ready to move on. **Mr. White** presented a copy of his testimony to the committee with information from Canada attached, Exhibit 11 and also provided the committee with written testimony from Russ Wahl who was not in attendance due to the weather, Exhibit 12. **Mr. White** asked about the fiscal note and urged the committee to reject the bill.

EXHIBIT (edh13a11)

EXHIBIT (edh13a12)

{Tape: 2 Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 19.1 - 27.3}

Julie Millam, Executive Director, Montana Family Coalition, stated that she was in opposition to HB 274. She further stated that she had reservations about the concept of the bill. **Ms. Millam** discussed being a home school mom and how well her children had done and how early they were prepared to attend college. She went on to discuss the problems she foresaw with making students attend school who do not want to be there. **Ms. Millam** declared she felt this was a family issue and not up to the government to fix. She urged to committee to reject HB 274.

Jenny Dodge, Citizens Network, stated she understands the problems, and what the bill is attempting to do. **Ms. Dodge** expressed her belief that kids dropping out of school is a result of family dysfunction. She further stated that she felt keeping kids in school would increase problems not solve them. **Ms. Dodge** stated her hope that the committee would reject this bill. **Ms. Dodge** suggested taking the requirement of the 8th grade out of the bill and just leaving the age requirement in.

Karen Gillespie, Choteau County, stated that she and other home school parents in Choteau County were in opposition to HB 274.

Ms. Gillespie presented her written testimony which is attached at Exhibit 13.

EXHIBIT (edh13a13)

Mike Barrett, stated he was in opposition to HB 274.

Informational Testimony: None

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

REP. BALLANTYNE asked **REP. JUNEAU** what happened if a student did not attend an alternate type of school, such as adult education or vocational training. **REP. JUNEAU** replied that the bill allowed for enforcement of this requirement. She further stated that the bill offered alternatives for not being in school.

REP. BALLANTYNE asked **REP. JUNEAU** if it would not be a good thing for children that did not comply and attend school to be put in an academy or go into the military. He stated that there was a need for programs that would be of substance to the children and have guidelines. **REP. JUNEAU** stated that she was in favor of any opportunity that would give students some choices to help them get an education, training or skills would be a good idea.

REP. BRANAE asked **Mr. Weldon** to clarify who can take a GED, what the requirements are, and if it is a state decision or a school district decision and how it works. **Mr. Weldon** referred the question to **David Strong**. **Mr. Strong, GED Administrator, Office of Public Instruction**, answered that the requirements for taking the GED are set by the GED Testing Service. He further stated that each state is then allowed to set their own policies around the GED Testing Service's minimum requirements. **Mr. Strong** addressed the special requirements that need to be met to take the GED test at the age of 16. He explained that the reasons for taking the GED at 16 are applying for post secondary schooling, employment requirements and military recruitment requirements. **Mr. Strong** then explained the requirements for taking the GED at the ages of 17 and 18.

REP. BRANAE asked **Mr. Strong** if the school districts had any say in who could take the test or when. **Mr. Strong** answered that the districts can allow a 17 year old to take the test if they have a letter of approval from the school district they are attending.

REP. GIBSON asked Mr. White to explain his concern of HB 274 better. **Mr. White** explained that in Montana there is a compulsory attendance law that presently mandates that a child remain in a school setting until the age of 16 or 8th grade. He further stated that there are a number of exemptions that exempt them from the compulsory attendance law at present. **Mr. White** further stated the reason for their concern is that presently home schooling parents do not have to worrying with compulsory attendance laws past the age of 16 but with the change the home schooling parents would be required to report attendance until the age of 18 to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the only way they could get out of it would to have their child take the GED. He further stated that some parents did not want to do that.

REP. JACKSON expressed his concern to **REP. JUNEAU** about the value of the bill when a student does not wish to continue attending school and is capable of being self sufficient. **REP. JUNEAU** responded that she believed the bill provided provisions for parents to choose that option. She further stated that she felt that for students to leave school in this day and age is not good for students in general. **REP. JUNEAU** stated that any policy set would impact someone.

REP. JACKSON asked David Strong if a student had to be a dropout to take the GED. **Mr. Strong** replied that right now the requirement is that a student must be a dropout to take the GED under the age of 18.

REP. JACKSON asked David Strong to clarify eligibility for taking the GED under the age of 18. **Mr. Strong** answered that the student would need to provide three documents to take the GED. Those documents are: 1) Signed notarized waiver demonstrating the consensus of the applicants school officials and parents that it is the best interest of the child to take the GED test; 2) they would need a letter from the Adult Basic Education Director stating they had taken Adult Basic Education classes or have taken a pretest showing their scores were adequate and would probably pass the GED; and 3) the student would need to demonstrate their need for taking the test.

{Tape: 3 Side: A Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 25.8}

REP. JACKSON asked Mr. Strong where the rules came from. **Mr. Strong** replied that the rule regarding a student not being enrolled in an accredited school at the time of taking the GED was a policy of the GED Testing Services. He further stated he had contacted the GED Testing Services about the rule and was informed there was no exemption to the rule.

REP. JACKSON asked Mr. Strong what level of schooling was used for the GED test. **Mr. Strong** replied that the GED level was arrived at by using high school graduating senior.

REP. LEHMAN asked **REP. JUNEAU** if there was a fiscal note for the bill. **REP. JUNEAU** stated that the fiscal note was making its way to the committee. She further stated the information she had on the fiscal note showed an impact to Fiscal Year 2005. **REP. JUNEAU** referred the question to Jeff Weldon for further answer.

REP. LEHMAN further asked **REP. JUNEAU** if the fiscal note increased the general fund because of the increase in the ANB caused by keeping students in schools until age 18, or was it generated by additional expense for truancy officers. **REP. JUNEAU** deferred the questions to Jeff Weldon. **Mr. Weldon** answered that the fiscal note reflected the fiscal costs to the state general fund. He further replied that truant officers were the responsibility of the school districts.

REP. LEHMAN asked Mr. Weldon if the fiscal note was impacting the general fund because of the increase in ANB and if there could be additional expenses to the local school districts in terms of expenses for truant officers. **Mr. Weldon** replied that because of additional students being educated each year the local school districts would have higher base and maximum budgets, so local taxpayers would have to pay that part of the budget. He further indicated there was no mention of the truancy expenses.

REP. LEHMAN further asked Mr. Weldon if there could be additional expense to the local taxpayers in terms of property taxes for making up that portion of student costs that the state does not pickup. **Mr. Weldon** answered that was correct.

REP. LEHMAN asked Mr. Weldon asked if he had the statistics of how many of the 50 states have compulsory attendance to age 18. **Mr. Weldon** replied that the sponsor had those statistics and had passed them out to the committee.

REP. WAGMAN asked **REP. JUNEAU** to walk the committee through the statistics to explain the point she was trying to make. **REP. JUNEAU** explained that she was trying to show how many states had compulsory attendance to age 17 or 18, and also to show that the states which have compulsory education to age 17 or 18 reflect higher graduation rates particularly for American Indian students.

REP. WAGMAN asked **REP. JUNEAU** if the statistics were valid comparisons, did they have the same type of system in the states

and did they have the same social economic situations. **REP. JUNEAU** stated that she did not have the answer to that question.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSEN asked REP. JUNEAU if there were data available showing the states with their compulsory attendance age and their dropout rates. **REP. JUNEAU** answered that she could take the chart and expand it putting in 17 or 18, whatever the age was, then the dropout rate would be just the opposite of what the graduation rate was based on a four-year period.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSEN asked REP. JUNEAU if she would explain where the report came from. **REP. JUNEAU** explained she had received the report from the National Center for Education web site.

CHAIRMAN ANDERSEN asked Mr. Juneau if the Trustees that supported this bill addressed how they felt the compulsory attendance to age 18 would improve discipline problems and possibly create more responsibility among the students. **Mr. Juneau** answered that they felt if they could make kids stay in school until age 18 it then becomes the responsibility of the school district to find alternative educational ways to keep them there and make them successful. **Mr. Juneau** further stated that his school district is developing a five-year comprehensive plan to address and meet these types of issues and concerns.

REP. ANDERSEN further asked Mr. Juneau if he felt that the innovation and implementation of the innovative programs might keep students in school, therefore, making the need for requiring students to attend school until age 18 not necessary. **Mr. Juneau** stated they need reasons for students to be in school. He further answered that his school board is in support of the bill because they need to make sure they keep the kids in school. **Mr. Juneau** declared that in his community it was too easy for students to dropout of school and they want to make them have to stay in school.

REP. LAWSON asked Mr. Weldon could interpret the chart and how inversion of the chart would work. **Mr. Weldon** replied that he was deferring to REP. JUNEAU. REP. JUNEAU answered that the report was based on a year to year statistics gathered. She further stated that the information could also be gathered over a four year period to show the percentages and it was computed by a formula. **REP. JUNEAU** referred the committee to the National Center for Education Statistics for further information.

Closing by Sponsor:

REP. JUNEAU stated that there was a conceptual amendment introduced by OPI and that she was willing to work with OPI to

make sure that the provisions set forth by the GED Testing Services was met. She further stated she was willing to work with the home school representatives to make sure that the HB 274 did not infringe upon their rights to teach their children at home. **REP. JUNEAU** further stated she believed that it was good public policy for the State of Montana and State leaders need to accept responsibility for guiding the State forward and believes this law would help them to strengthen Montana's educational system and make Montana a better state. **REP. JUNEAU** asked the committee to pass HB 274.

{Tape: 3; Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 25.4}

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 6:12 P.M.

REP. JOAN ANDERSEN, Chairman

MARI PREWETT, Secretary

JA/MP

EXHIBIT (edh13aad)